

Union Lodge, F. & A. M.,  
also known as Masonic Lodge  
63 Main Street  
Nantucket  
Nantucket County  
Massachusetts

HABS No. MASS-899

HABS  
MASS  
10-NANT  
23-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D. C. 20240

UNION LODGE, F. &amp; A. M., also known as Masonic Lodge

HABS  
MASS  
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Location: 63 Main Street (north side of Main Street,  
formerly State Street), Nantucket, Massachusetts.

Present Owner: Pacific National Bank

Present Occupant: Pacific National Bank

Present Use: Trust Department of Pacific National Bank

Brief Statement  
of Significance: One of first buildings to break with the simple  
architectural style of Quaker Nantucket and  
include extensive Federal style decoration.

#### PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

##### A. Physical History:

##### 1. Original and subsequent owners:

- 1802 -- Union Lodge, Free and Accepted Masons, of Nantucket bought land from William Rotch for \$1200 and built that year.
- 1835 -- Trustees of Admiral Sir Isaac Coffin Lancastrian School, in a transfer as a trust fund from William Coffin and Samuel Cary, acting for Union Lodge.
- 1838 -- William Coffin (Jr.) bought from Coffin School for \$2500.
- 1838 -- James B. Thomson bought from Elizabeth C. Coffin, widow of William Coffin who had died very suddenly.
- 1852 -- Edward Mitchell from James B. Thomson.
- 1870 -- David Thain from heirs of Edward Mitchell; thence Mary B. Thain by deed from husband.
- 1891 -- Almon T. Mowry from estate Mary B. Thain.
- 1893 -- Mary G. Mowry by deed from Almon T. Mowry.
- 1909 -- Katherine A. Pollard from heirs Mary G. Mowry.
- 1915 -- John and Catherine M. Roberts from estate of Katherine A. Pollard.
- 1952 to date -- Pacific National Bank.

(Abstract, Records Registry of Deeds,  
Nantucket, Massachusetts)

2. Date of erection: 1802. Land was purchased in March, 1802 and by June of that year the building was enough completed to hold a celebration with dinner served afterwards in "the hall of the new building". The corner-stone was laid before the brethren dined; it apparently was not done before the building was erected. Records do not show the location of the corner-stone and its whereabouts remain a mystery, although in 1805 a vote was recorded as follows: "Voted the report of the committee respecting the moving of the corner-stone and placing of a post in front be accepted. Voted that the corner-stone be removed out in full view."  
(Abstract, Union Lodge... by Turner)
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: Originally rectangular in shape, this building was described by the Rev. James Freeman, a visitor to the Island in 1807, as "an elegant building with Ionick pilasters in front". The pilasters are still prominent. The classic details of the building are done in wood. It has rounded windows and Adamesque swags in the cornice of one of the bays. These swags probably also appeared in at least one other bay, in the part which was removed.

Records of the Lodge during construction of the building in 1802 contain the following, "Voted, that the committee who were chosen to over-see the building of our new Lodge be authorized and are hereby authorized to continue on and have the outside of the new building finished complete and the hall room likewise leaving the balustrade on the top for further directions".

5. Notes on alterations and additions: In 1872 the western section of the building was demolished to make space for the erection of the Captain David Thain house, which in turn was razed in 1962. The building now has a square plan. It was remodelled in 1970 by the Pacific National Bank.
- B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure: After the building was erected, two auctions were held to dispose of remaining lumber to Bro. John Hammett for 3 pounds, 16 shillings; a stone mantel, joint and hearth to Bro. Aaron Mitchell for 12 pounds and a stove to Bro. William Coffin for 7 pounds.

During the anti-Masonic period in the 1830's, in order to save their assets, Union Lodge transferred its property and funds by a skillfully arranged deed to the Trustees of the Coffin School. (Abstract, Records Registry of Deeds, Nantucket).

The property was sold for \$2500 and the fund was held by the Coffin School Trustees under the original trust until 1921 when it terminated.

Union Lodge used the building until it was sold in 1838, after which meetings were held in the Atheneum until that building was destroyed by the fire of 1846. Meetings were held in various buildings until Union Lodge built the present Masonic Building on Lower Main Street in 1890.

The old building was subsequently used as an academy when Cyrus Peirce rented it for \$50 a year in 1837, as a meeting-place for the newly started Odd Fellows, and for various stores on the lower floor. Two of these shops were kept side by side by two brothers, Moses and Edward Mitchell, well-known, upright and respected Quakers. They sold "penny attractions especially tempting to school children" as well as slates, books, pencils and other school supplies.

The Handbook of Nantucket in 1874 carried an advertisement for a Shell Store, proprietor Mrs. George R. Folger, in "the store next above the Pacific National Bank, Main Street".

More recently, in 1935 and for some time afterwards, the Civic League Headquarters were located on the second floor. After that the building was occupied by various small, seasonal businesses until it became too deteriorated for occupancy. The Bank considered razing the structure to use the land for parking, but was persuaded to restore it instead.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Old photograph showing building before the west end was cut off and records of votes at time of building in Union Lodge... by Turner; view of Pacific National Bank with Lodge building at edge of picture in Fifty Glimpses of Nantucket Island by John F. Murphy; lithograph by Ruth Haviland, "Lower Main Street" reproduced in The Beck Calendar for 1956; photograph of detail, windows and pilasters in A Mirror of Nantucket by George Allen Fowlkes, 1959.

2. Bibliography:

Fowlkes, George Allen. A Mirror of Nantucket. New Jersey: 1959.

Turner, Harry B. Union Lodge, F. & A. M. Nantucket: Inquirer and Mirror Press, 1941.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: With rather elaborate classic detail both inside and out this was one of the first buildings to break with the simple architectural style traditional on the Island up to that time.
2. Condition of fabric: The building was allowed to deteriorate when the owner, Pacific National Bank, was refused permission to demolish it by the Historic District Commission; in 1970 the Bank restored the building and its condition is now excellent.

B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 27' 0" by 25' 6", original length c. 44' 8", width the same, 25' 6"; two stories; three bays, originally five.
2. Foundations: Rubblestone, brick on top.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Wood frame, sheathing; on south side (front) clapboards painted grey, on other sides weathered shingles.
4. Structural system, framing: Wood frame, corner posts exposed, extend up one story only, presumably stud wall on second story; no apparent connection between either interior or exterior pilasters and framing system.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads: Two stone steps and stone platform at front entry; wood bulkhead in rear not original.
6. Chimneys: One brick chimney.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Front entry doorway: 1966, simple trim, three vertical panels below, six light sash above; front eastern doorway to store, simple trim, double doors, three large lights in each, single horizontal panel in each below; rear doorway to store, simple trim (but of different period than that in front), double doors, six light sash in each door, square panel below in each. In 1971, new western door in south elevation with lead came in opposing curvilinear pattern in glass overdoor and narrow fluted pilasters, center door removed, new door on north

elevation.

- b. Windows and shutters: First floor: 1966, eight-over-eight in front, simple trim, ten-over-fifteen in rear, simple trim with splayed lintel in rear. 1971, twelve-over-eight, all new windows, two on south facade, three on north facade. Second floor: 1966, six-over-six sash, bottom opens but not hung, glazed round window arch in five segments, wood muntins; windows south elevation have exterior pilaster trim and keystone moldings, three north elevation and one east elevation have plain flat trim and keystone. No shutters.

8. Roof

- a. Shape, covering: At present hipped roof to point. Composition roofing, probably wood shingle originally.
- b. Cornice, eaves: South elevation, box cornice with wood gutter serving as crown mold, egg and dart molding above dentils, entablature with rosettes over flat pilasters with Roman Ionic capitals (easternmost capital new 1971), western bay of entablature projects slightly and contains a panel with swags.

C. Description of the Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. First floor: In 1966, large room, probably originally a store, occupies the two easternmost bays; it is enterable from south (front) and north. Stairhall in westernmost bay and small room to north behind it. Originally probably matching large room to west of stairhall. In 1971, entry into stairhall, one room in south side with new door into Bank, two rooms on north side, bathroom under stairs.
- b. Second floor: In 1966, large room in two easternmost bays, stairhall in back of westernmost bay and small room in front of it. Originally the entire second floor was probably one large space occupying all five original bays; the stairs may have occupied a smaller area more in the front of the building. Evidence for the existence of one large space is found in the fact that the north-south wall, now partitioning off the stairhall, abutts the cove of the ceiling and the cornice of the north and south walls, which run the length of the existing building, stop abruptly abutting the west wall rather than turning the corner. Also there is a line on the floor running north-south a few feet from the east wall with a bow in the middle which shows, in conjunction with the treatment of the

wainscoting, where a dais was formerly located. This dais would have occupied too large a proportion of the present room to be functional. In 1971, large room with cove ceiling remains, stairhall, behind stairhall small room.

- c. Basement: Full basement divided into two spaces by a brick wall, one space under stairhall and small room, one under large room.
- 2. Stairhall: In 1966, first to second floor, straight run up to north. In 1971, scissor stairs. Ladder stair to basement from entry hall, access to attic space by ladder only.
- 3. Flooring: Second floor, old wide random width board floor. First floor, modern, floor 3½" boards.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: First floor, modern finish wallboard on walls and ceiling and wood wainscoting. Second floor, plaster painted white, wainscoting on south, east and north walls. In 1971, chairrail on west wall.
- 5. Doorways and doors: 1971, new interior doors and doorways, center doorway on south side removed.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: Second floor, plaster ceiling coved on south, east and north walls, wood cornice with cove, egg and dart molding, dentils, and thin rope molding, paneled wainscoting with pierced decoration, arched window trim with egg and dart molding and keystone with moldings, paneled pilasters with rope moldings on edges and pierced decoration at capital and at wainscoting. Section of wainscoting where dais was is raised above rest of wainscoting.
- 7. Notable hardware: None.
- 8. Lighting, type of fixtures: Modern electric.
- 9. Heating: In 1966, none at present; at one time stoves. In 1971, electric heat.
- D. Site and Surroundings:
  - 1. Orientation and general setting: Building faces south and stands directly on sidewalk, Pacific Bank (owner) directly to east, small yard to north, garden of adjacent property to west on site of original two

west bays.

2. Outbuildings: None.
3. Landscaping and walks, enclosures: Yard to north bounded by simple wood fence.

Prepared by George L. Wrenn, III  
Nantucket, Massachusetts  
August, 1966  
August, 1971

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were prepared as part of the 1966 Historic American Buildings Survey summer project on Nantucket, Massachusetts. This is the first project of a continuing HABS comprehensive survey of the early architecture and urban design of Nantucket financed by a grant from the Nantucket Historical Trust.

The project was under the general supervision of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. Measured drawings were made under the supervision of George L. Wrenn, III. Historical information was provided by Mrs. Marie M. Coffin of Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photographs are by Cortlandt V. D. Hubbard of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The material was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Mrs. Constance Werner Ramirez, July 1971.